



CARDEA

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Report: The situation of Research Managers in Europe in the context of gender equality and EDI values – analysis of CARDEA survey results

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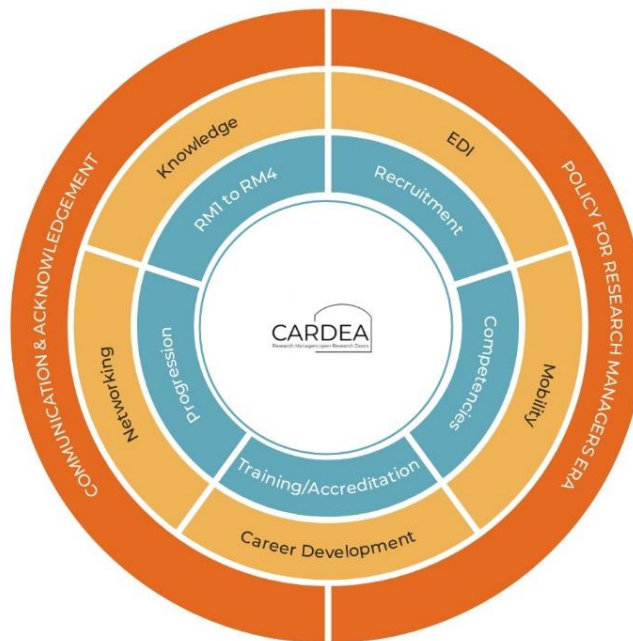


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1. Introduction and research context

In recent years, gender equality and the broader concept of EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) have gained importance in the scientific sector across Europe. Legislative changes, pressure from research funding institutions, and growing public awareness have led many organisations to implement formal procedures and equality plans. At the same time, significant barriers to access to scientific and managerial careers remain in practice, and the role of Research Managers (RMs) — those responsible for coordinating, administering and supporting research processes — often remains underappreciated.

The CARDEA project, one of whose objectives is to diagnose the state of gender equality and the level of implementation of EDI principles among RMs in Europe, conducted a large-scale survey. The analysis of the data allows for the identification of not only current problems, but also areas requiring urgent intervention.

2. CARDEA research methodology

The study was based on an online survey addressed to individuals holding the position of Research Manager or performing similar tasks in the academic and scientific sectors and, to a limited extent, in the private sector. The questionnaire included closed and semi-open questions, allowing for a qualitative description of the respondents' experiences.

Key features of the methodology:

- Data collection period: first half of 2025.
- Method of respondent recruitment: invitations via RM professional networks, scientific associations, mailing lists of universities and research institutes.
- Survey language: English
- Number of respondents: several dozen people from various European countries.
- Analysis: statistical (frequencies, correlations) and qualitative (analysis of the content of open-ended responses).

The project encountered limitations, including uneven representation of sectors – the dominance of the public and academic sectors meant that data from the commercial sector was scarce. Therefore, additional interviews were conducted with people working in private companies.

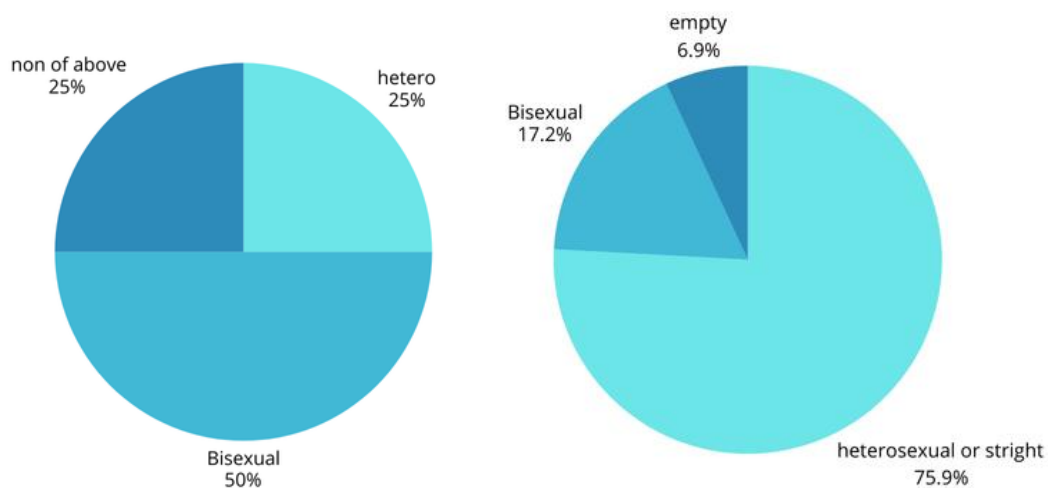
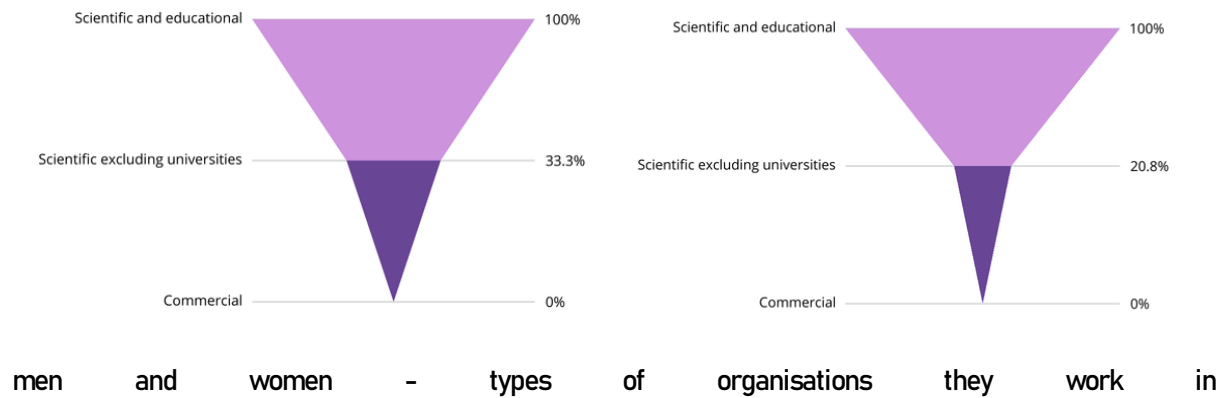
3. Demographic profile of respondents

An analysis of the respondent structure reveals a clear predominance of women – 83% of respondents identify as women, with the remaining 17% being men and non-binary individuals (a small percentage, but significant from an EDI perspective).

In terms of employment sector:

- 79% work in the scientific and educational sector.
- The rest come from scientific organisations

The age of respondents indicates a strong representation of people with 10+ years of professional experience, but also a significant group of people in the early stages of their RM careers.



4. Perceptions of gender equality in the research environment

One of the most important conclusions of the study is the low level of satisfaction with gender equality. Almost half of the respondents declare dissatisfaction with the current situation, which means that in many organisations, formal policies do not translate into real change in everyday functioning.

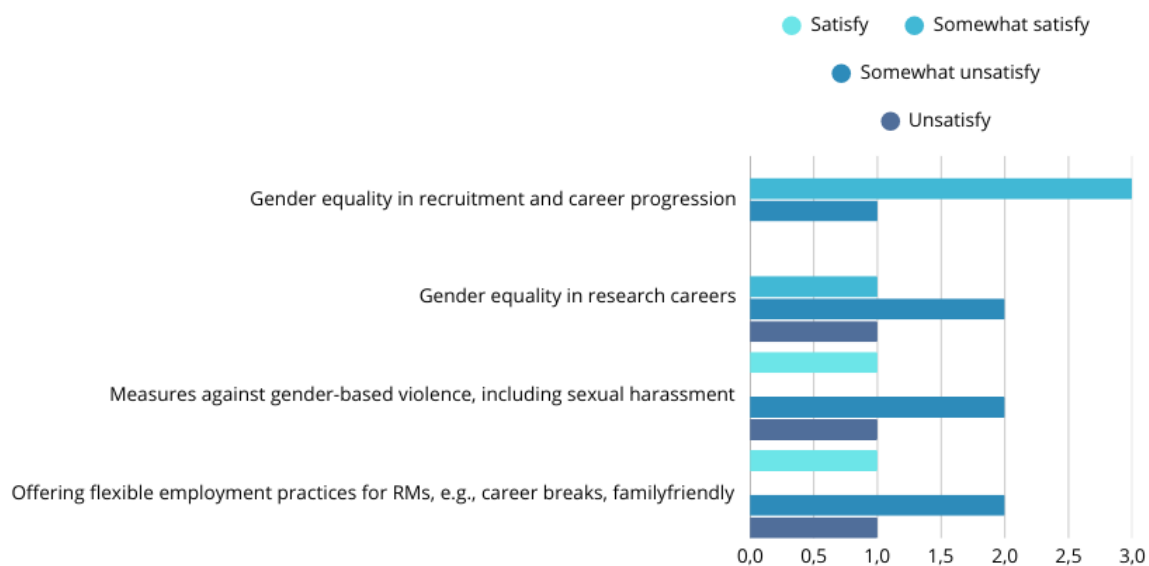
An analysis of the responses reveals recurring problems:

- Low representation of women in top management positions.
- Difficulties in balancing professional responsibilities with family life.
- Persistent stereotypes regarding women's leadership abilities.

5. Measures to prevent gender-based violence and sexual harassment

The level of satisfaction with anti-violence measures is also low. Respondents emphasise that:

- Procedures exist, but effective mechanisms for reporting incidents are often lacking.
- Those who report violations fear negative professional consequences.
- Anti-discrimination training is organised sporadically or is formal in nature, with no real impact on organisational culture.

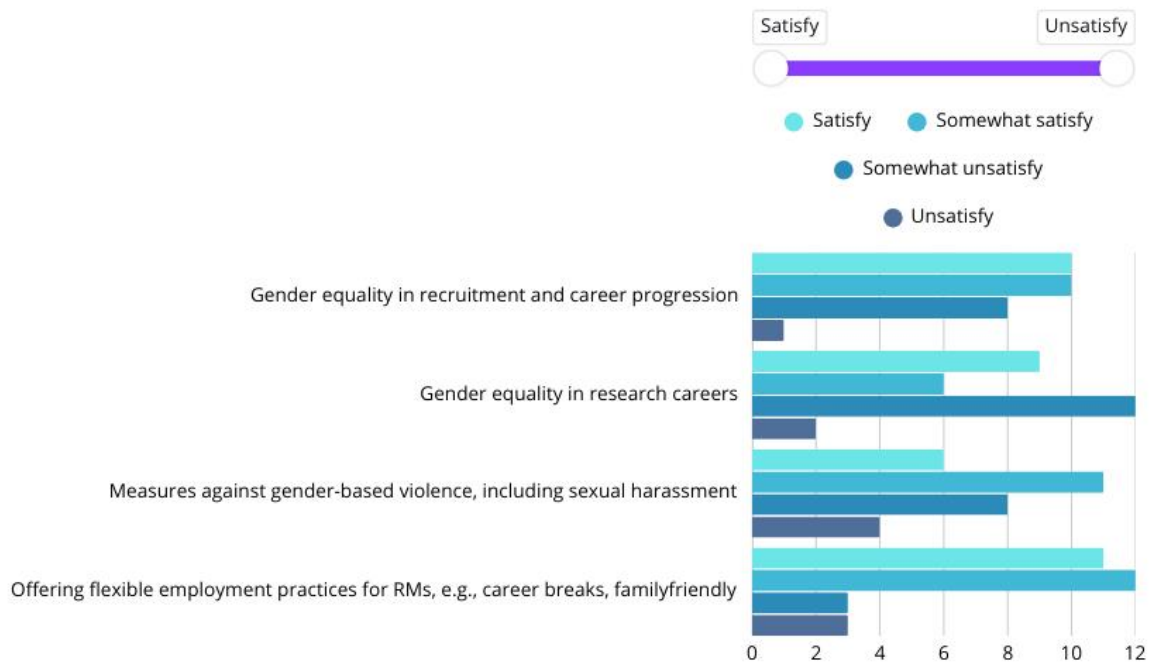


Male satisfaction

6. Promotion opportunities and career development for Research Managers

As many as 71% of respondents indicate a lack of promotion opportunities. This is due to, among other things:

- The lack of clearly defined career paths for RMs.
- The RM role is being treated as an administrative rather than a strategic position.
- Limited budgets for training and developing managerial skills.



Female satisfacion

7. Awareness and effectiveness of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and EDI initiatives

Although 79% of organisations have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP), as many as 38% of respondents are unaware of the existence of programmes supporting EDI. This suggests a problem with internal communication and a lack of employee involvement in the process of creating and monitoring GEPs.

8. Consideration of disability in organisational policies

Approximately 18% of respondents report some level of disability. This is a relatively high figure when compared to European data. However, these individuals indicate that accessibility policies are implemented unevenly and that workplace accommodations are often lacking.

9. Data gap regarding the commercial sector

The CARDEA project notes that there is a lack of reliable data on the situation of RMs in the private sector. Qualitative interviews with company representatives revealed that:

- RM tasks are often spread across different roles (e.g. project manager, analyst, coordinator).
- These individuals do not identify themselves as RMs, which makes it difficult to study this group.

10. Conclusions from qualitative interviews – private sector and universities

Interviews at large universities revealed greater progress in implementing EDI values, but even there, RM are not always included in equality plans.

In private companies, awareness of the role of RM is low, and equality policies are often limited to legal requirements.

11. Recommendations for research institutions and decision-makers

By gathering all suggestions and advice from specialists in the field of EDI policy development from major universities and other scientific and even governmental organisations, we have created a list of recommendations.

1. Strengthening RM career paths in academic and commercial organisations.
2. Better internal communication about existing EDI programmes.
3. More research in the private sector.
4. Implement effective mechanisms for reporting violations and protecting whistleblowers.
5. Integrate accessibility issues into every aspect of human resources policy.

12. Summary

The CARDEA EDI survey highlights a complex and multifaceted picture of the situation of Research Managers (RMs) in Europe. While the findings draw attention to serious challenges — such as persistent gender inequalities, limited career progression opportunities, insufficient awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, and gaps in protection against gender-based violence — they also reveal positive developments that should not be overlooked.

Among the encouraging signs is the fact that a vast majority of participating organisations have already established Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), a step which places them in alignment with current European policy priorities and funding requirements. This demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to formalising gender equality objectives. Moreover, the survey found that almost one in five respondents identifies as having some level of disability, a representation that suggests growing inclusivity in recruitment and participation in research management roles across Europe.

Importantly, the CARDEA project has successfully opened a dialogue between sectors, including academia, public research institutions, and private companies. Although the commercial sector remains underrepresented in the data, initial interviews have laid the groundwork for greater engagement and mutual learning. The very process of gathering and analysing these findings has already increased awareness of RM roles and has brought EDI professionals and RMs into closer contact — a promising step towards more targeted and inclusive policies.

In universities and large research organisations, examples of good practice are emerging. Some institutions have implemented structured career pathways for RMs, invested in professional development,

and created safer reporting systems for discrimination or harassment. While these cases may not yet represent the majority, they provide concrete, replicable models for others to follow.

Looking ahead, there is genuine cause for optimism. The European research landscape is undergoing a gradual but noticeable cultural shift:

- The visibility of the RM profession is increasing, both within and outside the academic sector.
- The policy environment in Europe — through Horizon Europe requirements, national equality legislation, and institutional accountability measures — is creating stronger incentives for sustained action.
- The commitment of both male and female respondents to addressing gender and EDI issues suggests that these are no longer niche or “women’s” concerns, but shared professional priorities.

While the road ahead will require consistent effort, sustained investment, and cross-sector collaboration, the foundations for progress are being laid. With continued advocacy, improved data collection — particularly from the private sector — and the sharing of best practices, there is every reason to believe that Research Managers in Europe will gain stronger recognition, better career prospects, and workplaces where equality, diversity, and inclusion are not just policies, but lived realities.

In this sense, the CARDEA survey is not simply a mirror reflecting the current state of affairs — it is also a map pointing towards a more equitable and inclusive future for all RMs, regardless of gender, background, or sector.